

PHOTO GALLERY

Display the photos for this session around the room. Ask participants to spend some time viewing the photos and reading the captions. Explain that all these photos are related to MCC partners and projects around the world. All names are real and all explanation are true.

MARY'S STORY

After viewing the photos ask participants to sit together to begin Mary's Story. (While this is a composite and fictitious story it is based on a variety of true individual stories.) The introduction of the story (below) should be read as a group. Discuss the questions provided.

Then divide into three smaller groups and give each group one of the other parts of Mary's Story – "War and Conflict," "Gender," or "Poverty". Have each group read and discuss their part of the story and the issue involved. After small group discussion, bring the groups back together and ask each to share the highlights of their discussion.

Introduction

Meet Mary. Mary struggles for breath as she lies on a grass mat on the dirt floor of her home. The sunlight peeks in through the holes in the deteriorating thatched roof. While Mary would rather be outside, she doesn't have the strength to carry her weakened body from the house. Even if she did have the energy, she wouldn't want her neighbors to see her like this anyway. She hears her children outside and wishes she could somehow erase the same that she has brought into their lives. They are wonderful kids; they treat her so well, with so much love and respect, even as her health goes downhill. But Mary knows what she has putting them through. She couldn't afford to pay their school fees this year, so they have to stay at home; and because of the stigma and misunderstanding about AIDS in the town their friends won't even hang out with them anymore. As she looks at her crumbling home, she wonders what will happen to her children when she dies. She's never had the money she needed to fix up the house, and she fears that it might collapse in the next heavy rains, leaving her children without a place to live. She doesn't even want to think about how she will find them food or clothing.

How do you think Mary's life could have gotten so bad? What factors may have brought her to this difficult point in their life?



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Located in Mahomet, Ill., ELI is a community-based nonprofit organization emphasizing life skills for emerging youth leaders in third world countries. ELI has been formed by Paul and Virginia who have been working with youth in United States and abroad for more than 30 years. For further information on ELI, please call (217) 377-9444.